

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ARA-10 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00
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FM USINT BAGHDAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6005
INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI
USINT HAVANA
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY SANA
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BAGHDAD 0784

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDEV, MILI, ET, CU, IZ
SUBJECT: CUBANS IN ERITREA--IRAQI POLICY

REF: STATE 86083

1. SUMMARY: CUBANS IN ERITREA PUT IRAQ IN EMBARRASSING
DILEMMA BETWEEN COMMITMENT TO ARAB LIBERATION MOVEMENTS AND
FRIENDSHIP WITH SOVIET UNION AND CUBA. IRAQ SHOULD BE WILLING
TO SEEK CUBAN WITHDRAWAL AND MAY HAVE TAKEN STEPS TO
ENCOURAGE NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT. IRAN, YUGOSLAVIA, BRAZIL,
SPAIN, FRANCE AND SOMALIA MIGHT PLAY USEFUL ROLES. END
SUMMARY

2. ARAB LIBERATION IS A PILLAR OF THE BAATHI IDEOLOGY TO WHICH
THE IRAQI REGIME OFFICIALLY SUBSCRIBES. THE GOI HAS SUPPORTED
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ERITREAN LIBERATION GROUPS IN THE PAST WITH ARMS, MONEY AND,
BY SOME ACCOUNTS, WITH MILITARY ADVISORY PERSONNEL. THE REGIME
PUBLICLY SUPPORTS THE GOAL OF INDEPENDENCE FOR ERITREA,
ALTHOUGH IT IS UNCERTAIN THAT THIS SUPPORT PRESENTLY EXTENDS
BEYOND THE POLITICAL SPHERE. HOWEVER, THE STEADY STREAM
OF HIGH LEVEL ERITREAN VISITORS IN PAST MONTHS AND THEIR
EXPRESSION OF SATISFACTION WITH IRAQI POLICY SUGGESTS THAT

BAGHDAD IS STILL A SOURCE FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT, AT THE VERY LEAST. IN PRINCIPLE, IRAQ OPPOSES FOREIGN INTERVENTION IN THE AFFAIRS OF AFRICA AND THE ARAB WORLD. IN PRACTICE, IT ACKNOWLEDGES THAT INTERVENTION BY "FRIENDS" IS SOMETIMES NECESSARY.

3. IRAQ ALSO MAKES NOT SECRET OF ITS ANTIPATHY TOWARD THE GOVERNMENT OF ETHIOPIA. IRAQI MEDIA LOSE FEW OPPORTUNITIES TO CAST EPMG IN BAD LIGHT AS RACIST OPPRESSORS OF ARAB MINORITIES IN OGADEN AND ERITREA. MEDIA ALSO SCORN ETHIOPIAN PRETENSIONS TO SOCIALISM, AND SADDAM HUSSEIN HAS SUGGESTED THAT PRESENT POLITICAL COMPLEXION OF EPMG IS OPPORTUNISTIC WITH A SWING BACK TO REACTION AND A RENEWED ALLIANCE WITH WESTERN IMPERIALISM PROBABLE AT A FUTURE DATE.

4. ON THE OTHER HAND, IRAQ HAS CLOSE TIES TO THE SOVIET UNION AND CUBA. IRAQ, ALTHOUGH IT HAD CONDUCTED ITS OWN COVERT AIRLIFT TO SOMALIA DID NOT SEEM TO IMPEDE SOVIET AIRLIFT WHICH FACILITATED ETHIOPIAN BUILDUP FOR OGADEN CAMPAIGN. IRAQI MEDIA STUDIOUSLY AVOID MENTION OF SOVIET AND CUBAN PERSONNEL IN ETHIOPIA.

5. IRAQI RELATPPNS WITH SOVIET UNION ARE DEEP AND COMPLEX. AT MINIMUM, IRAQ WOULD BE UNWILLING TO RISK A BREAK WITH SOVIETS OVER MATTER NOT CENTRAL TO IRAQI INTERESTS IF THEY THOUGHT SOVIETS WOULD RESPOND BY CURTAILING IRAQI ACCESS TO CONFIDENTIAL

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SOVIET MILITARY SUPPLIES. EXAMPLE OF SOMALIA HAS MADE A STRONG DAIMPRESSION HERE. IRAQIS ARE MORE SUSPICIOUS THAN EVER ABOUT LONGRANGE SOVIET INTENTIONS IN THE REGION, BUT THEY ALSO REALIZE THAT NO OTHER BIG POWER WOULD FILL SOVIET ROLE IN IRAQI SECURITY BEFORE A LONG AND, IN IRAQI FEARS, POSSIBLE FATAL INTERIM HAD PASSED.

6. CUBA ENJOYS NO PARTICULAR LEVERAGE OVER IRAQ. NONETHELESS, IRAQ VALUES ITS PARTNERSHIP WITH CUBA IN THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT AND OTHER "PROGRESSIVE" THIRD WORLD CONTEXTS. RECENT VISIT OF CUBAN FOREIGN MINISTER RESULTED IN APPARENT DISAGREEMENT OVER THE HORN BUT MAY HAVE BEEN OCCASION TO EXPLORE POSSIBILITY OF A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT.

7. BAGHDAD PROVIDES A POSSIBLE SITE FOR CONTACTS BETWEEN ERITREAN LEADERS AND EPMG REPRESENTATIVES. IRAQI FOREIGN MINISTER HAS SPOKEN IN RECEPTIVE TERMS OF SUPPOSED CUBAN EFFORT TO OBTAIN NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENTS OF CONFLICTS IN THE HORN. THE ERITREANS COME AND GO FREQUENTLY. ALTHOUGH BAGHDAD AND ADDIS DO NOT HAVE DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS, A HIGH LEVEL ETHIOPIAN DELEGATION VISITED LAST DECEMBER, A PROBABLE RESULT OF CUBAN AND SOVIET INITIATIVES. TOTAL CONTROL OF THE

LOCAL MEDIA AND THE SECRETIVE NATURE OF THE IRAQI GOVERNMENT
WOULD ALLOW A DISCREET ATMOSPHERE FOR DIPLOMATIC CONTACTS.
WE ARE NOT SURE THAT MEDIATION IS AN IRAQI OBJECTIVE, BUT
THERE ARE RECURRING RUMORS THAT THE REGIME WOULD BE WILLING
TO PLAY SUCH A ROLE.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BAGHDAD 0784

8. THERE ARE SEVERAL NATIONS WHICH COULD HELP PERSUADE IRAQ
TO TAKE A HELPFUL STAND TOWARD GETTING THE CUBANS OUT OF
ERITREA. PROBABLY THE MOST EFFECTIVE WOULD BE IRAN. THE DEEP
MUTUAL SUSPICION BETWEEN THESE TWO NEIGHBORS HAS NOT PREVENTED
TRULY IMPRESSIVE EFFORTS TO SOLVE THEIR BILATERAL DISPUTES.
THE IRAQI REGIME HAS JUST ENOUGH CONFIDENCE IN THE IRANIAN
GOVERNMENT AND MORE THAN ENOUGH RESPECT TO LISTEN CAREFULLY.
THEIR MUTUAL INTEREST IN CURTAILING BIG POWER INVOLVEMENT IN
THE AREA IS ALL THE EXCUSE WHICH THE IRANIANS WOULD NEED
TO RAISE THE SUBJECT. BOTH GOVERNMENTS PROVIDE AID TO SOMALIA,
AND THE BAGHDAD REGIME SHOULD RECOGNIZE THE NEED TO CONVINCE
TEHRAN THAT IT IS NOT A TOOL OF SOVIET STRATEGIC POLICY.

9. OTHER COUNTRIES WHICH ENJOY SOME INFLUENCE HERE ARE
YUGOSLAVIA, BRAZIL, SPAIN AND FRANCE. WE ARE NOT FAMILIAR

WITH THE POSITIONS OF ALL OF THOSE COUNTRIES ON CUBAN
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INVOLVEMENT IN ERITREA. THEY ARE, HOWEVER, STATES WHICH ENJOY BETTER THAN AVERAGE ACCESS TO THE BAGHDAD REGIME. YUGOSLAVIA PROBABLY ENJOYS BETTER RELATIONS HERE THAN ANY OTHER FOREIGN COUNTRY AND PROVIDES AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE CUBANS IN THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT. THE IRAQI GOVERNMENT VIEWS BRAZIL AS A TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT PARTNER OF POTENTIALLY GREAT IMPORTANCE. POLITICALLY, BRAZIL HAS A GOOD REPUTATION HERE AND CAN CLEARLY SPEAK WITH SOME AUTHORITY ABOUT THE NATURE OF CUBA'S FOREIGN ADVENTURES. SPAIN HAS A PRO-ARAB IMAGE, AND SPANISH ENVOYS HAVE BETTER THAN AVERAGE ACCESS. LIKE BRAZIL, IT CAN CLAIM A SPECIAL UNDERSTANDING OF CUBAN MOTIVATIONS.

10. THE ONLY MAJOR POWER ON THIS LIST IS FRANCE. IRAQIS BELIEVE THAT FRANCE IS FAIR TOWARD ARAB ISSUES, AND THE REGIME HAS NEVER SHOWN MUCH CONCERN ABOUT THE VESTIGES OF FRENCH IMPERIALISM IN AFRICA. THE IRAQIS WOULD ALSO UNDERSTAND THE FRENCH MOTIVATION FOR RIDDING DJIBOUTI'S NEIGHBOR OF CUBAN TROOPS.

11. FINALLY, ONE SHOULD NOT DISREGARD THE POSSIBLE INFLUENCE OF SOMALIA. IF SIAD BARRE IS NOT TOO DISILLUSIONED BY IRAQ'S FAINTHEARTED SUPPORT OF HIS OWN WAR WITH ETHIOPIA, HE COULD MAKE A STRONG ARGUMENT TO THE IRAQIS FOR USING DIPLOMATIC LEVERAGE TO OUST THE CUBANS FROM ERITREA AND THE REST OF THE HORN. IRAQ HAS AN INVESTMENT IN SOMALIA WHICH IT CAN BEST PROTECT BY REFURBISHING ITS TARNISHED CREDENTIALS AS A BASTION OF ARABISM AGAINST FOREIGN INFLUENCES.

12. THE DEPARTMENT WILL NOTE THAT WE HAVE SUGGESTED NO ARAB GOVERNMENTS OTHER THAN SOMALIA. NONE ENJOY MORE THAN PROPER RELATIONS. OF THOSE IMMEDIATELY CONCERNED WITH ERITREAN EVENTS, SUDAN AND YEMEN ARE VIEWED WITH SCARCELY CONCEALED CONTEMPT
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WHILE SAUDI ARABIA IS IRAQ'S CONSERVATIVE RIVAL FOR INFLUENCE AMONG THE ERITREAN LIBERATION GROUPS. THE BAGHDAD LEADERSHIP WOULD LISTEN ATTENTIVELY TO SAUDI VIEWS BUT MIGHT REACH CONTRARY CONCLUSIONS ABOUT CUBAN WITHDRAWAL. IN THEIR MORE CYNICAL MOMENTS, THE RULERS OF IRAQ MAY ENJOY THE DISCOMFITURE OF THE LEADING ARAB "REACTIONARY" OVER THE PRESENCE OF MARXIST-LENINISTS ACROSS THE RED SEA.
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